

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) today announced that Marquette University will receive \$300,000 for their Youth Empowerment to Succeed (YES) program. The goal of Marquette's YES program is to promote healthy lifestyles and life choices among middle school children in the Milwaukee area. These funds will be used to work with 6th and 7th grade students enrolled in Bruce-Guadalupe Community School, which draws much of its enrollment from an area of Milwaukee that has struggled with violence, unhealthy behaviors, and low academic achievement.

Nationwide, Youth Empowerment Programs (YEP) are funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health. Marquette's Youth Empowerment to Succeed (YES) program is Marquette's chapter of the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP).

"The middle school students at Bruce-Guadalupe Community School will be getting a wonderful opportunity to work with mentors from Marquette University who can demonstrate the success they have achieved through making healthy life choices," Congresswoman Moore said. "The YES Program funds will make it possible for these younger students to have regular contact with goal-driven young adults who are positive role models. Furthermore, this program will also be a very valuable experience for Marquette students, who will have the opportunity to interact with and give back to the larger Milwaukee community."

Youth Empowerment Programs are focused on promoting healthy lifestyles among minority youth through the development of health policies and programs that work to eliminate health disparities. One main focus of Marquette's program is to combat negative self-esteem and body image among Hispanic teens, which often lead to high-risk behaviors, the exponential rise of childhood obesity and the associated threat of chronic disease.

The YES funds will be used to expand Marquette University's program, which was once focused on high-school students but will now be implemented at the middle-school level. The funds will pay for a five-week summer session that will offer academic enrichment, fitness and wellness training, and cultural activities. A case management approach will allow program coordinators to establish individual goals and programming for each student based on their needs. Each student's plan will be formulated in a collaborative effort of YES staff, the student, and their parent(s).

The Bruce-Guadalupe students participating in the program will be closely monitored to determine the project's success. Qualitative and quantitative information will be collected so that data can be compared to an age-matched control group in order to assess program effectiveness and allow for replication. The majority of programs will be held at the United Community Center (UCC).

"The partnership between the United Community Center (UCC) and the Marquette University HCOP program through the Youth Empowered to Succeed program (YES) is one that we believe will contribute immensely to our shared goal of promoting healthy lifestyles and greater access to higher education for Hispanic youth of this community," commented Virgilio Rodriguez, UCC's Associate Director of Youth Programs. "This program, which will combine the expertise of both Marquette and UCC, will result in a model for youth development which involves physical fitness and effective strategies for exposing and preparing Hispanic students, early on, for careers in health."

Collaborators on this project include: Centro de la Comunidad Unida/United Community Center (UCC), Bruce-Guadalupe Community School, and the Latino Arts, Inc.

###